

West Valley road projects await funding from federal stimulus package

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Howard Fischer

Capitol Media Services

PHOENIX - Five major West Valley road projects totaling more than \$287 million are among those on the list state transportation officials hope will be financed through a proposed federal stimulus package.

The state's entire list, ranging from major highway construction to sign replacements, represent contracts the state actually could award within six months according to Tim Tait, spokesman for the Arizona Department of Transportation. And that, he said, makes them likely candidates for the kind of projects the Obama administration wants to jump start the economy through new spending and new jobs.

The largest pricetag for a West Valley project is \$146 million to build 17 miles of Loop 303 from Lake Pleasant Road to I-17. The Sun Cities would be directly affected by two items on the list: \$42 million to widen Grand Avenue from 99th Avenue to Loop 303 and \$13 million to widen Grand from 83rd to 99th avenues.

Tait said the list does not necessarily represent the projects the state Transportation Board considers the most important. In fact, some of them are not even on the board's five-year plan.

"The emphasis here was looking at projects that are ready and that we can move on quickly," he said.

Tait said, though, this is not just a "wish list" which includes things that really aren't needed solely because the state thinks the federal government will be handing out cash.

"I think the argument can be made that all these projects are needed," he said.

"The needs in Arizona far outpace the available funding," Tait said, with the state's rapid growth occurring even as gasoline tax collections are declining. And a proposal to ask voters to hike the state sales tax by a penny to generate \$42.6 billion over the next 30 years to help catch up failed to qualify for the ballot.

"This is an opportunity for us to move forward with those projects that we have had ready or we can make ready very quickly," he said.

Tait said what the federal government finally funds from that list - assuming Congress approves a stimulus package - will depend on the criteria in the legislation. For example, he said, ADOT is only guessing the government will want projects that actually can get started within six months.

"We tried to find something reasonable and identify the projects that fit that criteria," he said.

ADOT WISH LIST

- Widen Grand Avenue from 99th Avenue to Loop 303 — \$42 million.
- Widen Grand Avenue from 83rd to 99th avenues — \$13 million.
- Build new interchange on Loop 101 at Beardsley Road — \$27.5 million.
- Build 17 miles of Loop 303 from Lake Pleasant Road to I-17 — \$146 million.
- Widen I-10 from Dysart Road to Sarival Avenue — \$59 million.